## Why investing in teachers is the answer

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If you’re serious about raising student achievement, you have to change what happens in the classroom…The variability at the classroom level is up to four times greater than at the school level. So really there’s no such thing as a good school, but there *is* such a thing as a school full of good teachers…In terms of value-added it doesn’t make that much difference what school you go to, but it matters very much which teachers you get in that school.

…Almost everybody in the system functions as if teachers create learning. Teachers do not create learning, *learners create learning*; teachers create the conditions in which students learn. It’s the old joke about schools being places where children go to watch teachers work...You get more learning by getting the students to do more of the work; we believe that in our heads, but we don’t believe it in our hearts because, when the pressure is on, we revert to telling. At the time, it seems the right thing to do but we know it isn’t.

So if you’re not requiring every single student to engage in the questioning you’re doing or in the discussion you’re leading, you are actually making things worse…Thinking is really hard and that’s the challenge: to create classrooms where it’s not optional.

In education, “what works?” is not the right question because everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere; what’s important in education is: “Under what conditions does this work?”…Teaching is all about knowing the conditions under which a particular technique is likely to work. That is why I say that you can’t tell teachers what to do: Not because I want to be nice to teachers but because the nature of expertise in teaching is not the kind of expertise you can communicate by telling people.

1. Raising achievement is important
2. Raising achievement requires improving teacher quality
3. Improving teacher quality requires improving teacher professional development
4. To be effective, teacher professional development must address what teachers do in the classroom and how teachers change what they do in the classroom.

So the idea of **assessment for learning** combined with **teacher learning communities** turns out to be a uniquely high point of high leverage. It seems to be the way in which people can actually make changes in their practice most quickly; it acts as something of a Trojan horse into wider issues of pedagogy, psychology and curriculum… If you’re serious about getting started, [assessment for learning] seems to be the easiest way to make small changes to your classroom.

…Small, incremental changes are better than big changes because when you make big changes things go wrong, classroom discipline falls apart and you go back to doing what you know how to do…I would say that for most teachers, changing two or three things in a year is about all you could manage…Develop these things and make them so much of your practice that you don’t need to think about them…